

Choctaw Creek (0202F) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Choctaw Creek (0202F) in the summer of 2014 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Choctaw Creek is an unclassified perennial/intermittent with pools water body that is approximately 44 miles in length. The creek is located in Grayson County. It was identified in the 2014 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2010.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Choctaw Creek should be revised to secondary contact recreation 1 (SCR 1). SCR applies to water bodies where water recreation can occur, but the nature of the recreation does not involve a significant risk of ingestion. SCR 1 applies to intermittent and perennial freshwaters where site-specific information demonstrates that primary contact recreation has little to no likelihood of occurring due to physical characteristics of the water body such as shallow depths or lack of pools.

During the field surveys, field staff did not observe any type of recreation occurring on the stream. Interviews with stakeholders and landowners indicated that they have never personally used, witnessed, or heard of PCR on the stream. One interviewee stated that they had observed and heard of boating on the creek. At the time of the second survey, the study area was experiencing moderate drought conditions which resulted in dry stream beds at four of the seventeen study sites. Choctaw Creek had an average thalweg of 0.65 meters (25.59 in) and two substantial pools deeper than 1 meter. Stream flow was high to normal during the first survey, but no flow to normal conditions were encountered during the second survey. Public access is available at fifteen survey sites via bridge crossings and two sites were only accessible via private property; there are no public parks on the creek. Access from the stream bank was difficult in many locations due to slick banks, near vertical slopes, and dense vegetation.

Steep banks and dense vegetation decrease the likelihood of PCR use. Choctaw Creek has several impediments to recreation and no accounts of PCR, supporting reclassification to SCR1. In accordance with §307.4 (j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR to SCR1 with the corresponding geometric mean of 630 colonies *E. coli*/100mL for all of Choctaw Creek, from the confluence with the Red River east of Denison to the upstream perennial portion near the intersection of SH 56 and SH 289 in Grayson County. This reclassification is appropriate due to “physical conditions related to the natural features of the water body” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(5).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Choctaw Creek in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ would provide additional public notice and opportunity for public comment. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would review this proposed change under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act.